



Scottish Government:
Biodiversity Duty Compliance
Report-
Argyll and Bute Council- 2017.





Key themes.

1. **Introductory Information**- Governance, Decision Making Process and Promotion of Biodiversity.
2. **Mainstreaming** – integrating biodiversity into corporate projects, plans and strategies.
3. **Action by Department** – activities to protect and enhance biodiversity.

Appendix 1. Argyll and Bute Council Biodiversity Duty Action Plan Monitoring Report 2017. This report is based on the knowledge and evidence provided by key personnel with a remit for biodiversity conservation within Argyll and Bute Council. Thank to everyone who helped with providing information.

This report will be made available on the Argyll and Bute Council's website: www.argyll-bute.gov.uk a copy can be requested from Council's Local Biodiversity Officer: marina.curran-colthart@argyll-bute.gov.uk



Section 1: Introductory information

Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies are required to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities. Following an amendment in the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011; every three years public bodies are also required to publish and make publically available their report on the actions they have taken to meet their biodiversity duty. Our last report was published online in February 2015 following council approval. Whilst these reports are welcome at any time, in this round they must be available on line by the end of 2017.

a) Overview of Argyll and Bute Council organisation's regulatory role.

Governance.

Overall governance is provided by the elected Members of Argyll and Bute Council. All policies and key strategies are reported to Council for discussion and approval. Environmental policies and initiatives which include biodiversity are reported to the relevant Council committee. Progress on delivering the Argyll and Bute Council Biodiversity Duty Action Plan is updated annually.



b) How biodiversity feeds into Argyll and Bute Council decision-making structure.

Our elected members have championed biodiversity through representation on: the **Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee**, the Local Nature Reserve Management Teams at Duchess Wood and Holy Loch, the Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Partnership and the Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust. Our Chief Executive, Directors and the relevant Heads of Service have also recognised the importance of environmental initiatives and given their support to a wide range of projects. Since our last reporting round the council has become a member of the Scottish Forum on Natural Capital with representation on the working group involved in 'Future Land Management Business Models Working Group'

c) Some examples of promoted biodiversity initiatives:

The council promotes the following:

- i) Local Development Plan: <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/ldp>



- ii) The Biodiversity Technical Note for Planners and Developers and the Biodiversity Checklist: https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/biodiversity_technical_note_feb_2017_4.pdf
- iii) Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust: <https://www.act-now.org.uk/en/>
- iv) Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Action Plan- currently being refreshed.
- v) Annual campaign – ‘What’s for the garden stays in the garden’ along with information on the identification and control of Invasive non-Native Species: <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/guidance-gardeners-invasive-or-harmful-plants>

Partnership working:

Partnerships in Argyll and Bute have a number of common key principles: openness, trust and honesty between partners

- agreed shared goals and values
- regular communication between partners openness and
- trust and honesty between partners



- **Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Partnership.**

This partnership has the responsibility for the delivery of the Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Action Plan – this is currently being refreshed to a three year plan to reflect the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy 2020 vision and enable us to prepare for a further refresh as a result of the outcomes of the BREXIT process.

- **Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership –**

The main aim of the Community Planning Partnership is to deliver the outcomes within the Single outcome agreement (SOA). The purpose of the SOA is to detail strategic or high level priorities, identify the outcomes which will be delivered by the partners either individually or jointly, and show how those outcomes will contribute to one or more of the Scottish Government national outcomes.

- **Single Outcome Agreement**

- Sustainability – Ensuring a sustainable future by protecting the natural environment and mitigating climate change.

- **Outcome 5.** People live active, healthier and independent lives.

- **Outcome 6.** People live in safer and stronger communities.

- Ensuring the natural and built environment is safe, respected, valued and free of environmental crime.



The importance of the natural environment is indicated by the 121 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (Scottish Natural Heritage, as noted in October 2017) that have been designated within the area, which in total cover almost ten per cent of Argyll and Bute's land area. Additionally, almost thirty per cent of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park area fall within the local authority's boundaries.

The Council's Biodiversity Officer provides support for a number of community groups involved in biodiversity projects most pertaining to habitat restoration and management for a variety of species. Some have issues with Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) and are currently making progress with eradication plans.





Section 2: Mainstreaming

This section highlights the wide variety of activities undertaken by Argyll and Bute Council to further the conservation of biodiversity. While not exhaustive, it illustrates the range of activities that have taken place and continue to take place.

2.1 Argyll and Bute Council Biodiversity Duty Plan 2016-2021: This was approved in April 2016 by the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee:

Decision

The Committee agreed to approve the refreshed version of the adopted document in order to capture the Council's biodiversity duty activities for reporting to the Scottish Government in 2018.
<https://www.argyllbute.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s109063/Draft%20Biodiversity%20Duty%20Action%20Plan%20consultation%20ended%209%20Feb%202016%20changes%20included%20March%202016%20draf.pdf>





2.2 Biodiversity and Local Development Policy:

The Local Development Plan sets out a range of policies and guidance to protect and enhance biodiversity:

Extract from POLICY LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development

- i) Conserve and enhance the natural and built environment and avoid significant adverse impacts on biodiversity, natural and built heritage resources;
- ii) Respect the landscape character of an area and the setting and character of settlements;
- iii) Avoid places with significant risk of flooding, tidal inundation, coastal erosion or ground instability; and
- iv) Avoid having significant adverse impacts on land, air and water environment.

Policy LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment, along with the following Supplementary Guidance:

Natural Environment

- SG LDP ENV 1 – Development Impact on Habitats, Species and Biodiversity (i.e. biological diversity)
- SG- Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)
- SG LDP ENV 2 – Development Impact on European Sites
- SG LDP ENV 3 – Management of European Sites



- SG LDP ENV 4 – Development Impact on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
- SG LDP ENV 5 – Development Impact on Local Nature Conservation
- SG LDP ENV 6 – Development Impact on Trees/Woodland
- SG LDP ENV 7 – Water Quality and the Environment
- SG LDP ENV 8 – Protection and Enhancement of Green Networks
- SG LDP ENV 9 – Development Impact on Areas of Wild Land
- SG LDP ENV 10 – Geodiversity
- SG LDP ENV 11 – Protection of Soil and Peat Resources
- SG LDP CST 1 – Coastal Development

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/written_statement_0.pdf

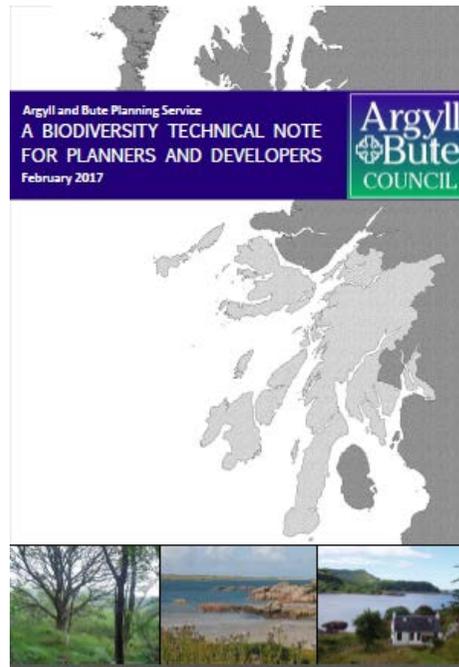
2.3. Biodiversity Technical Note for Planners and Developers.

To assist Argyll and Bute Council as the Planning Authority- a Biodiversity Technical Note for Planners and Developers along with the Biodiversity Checklist has been developed to ensure developers take biodiversity into account when carrying out site selection. The checklist includes, European Protected Species, Invasive Non-Native Species and a framework for eradication. In terms of planning application determination, biodiversity is a material consideration. https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/biodiversity_technical_note_feb_2017_4.pdf



The Local Biodiversity Officer provides advice to:

Planning colleagues, developers, community groups and members of the public on appropriate ecological surveys and assessment required for planning applications and in particular development activities likely to impact on European protected species along with priority habitats and species.





Section 3: Actions taken to improve biodiversity conservation

This section identifies actions that Argyll and Bute Council has undertaken on the ground to benefit biodiversity.

1. Argyll and Bute Council Biodiversity Duty Action Plan 2016-2021- refresh completed and report illustrates that it is on target.
2. Roadside Verge maintenance regime altered to encourage wild flowers and more diverse vegetation. Some Invasive Non-Native Species control and habitat restoration to improve site lines,
3. In the final stages of the process of granting a major Tree Preservation Order at a development site in Helensburgh a mix of individual trees and mixed woodland habitat.
4. Biodiversity habitat and species gains in Development Management as a result of the Biodiversity Checklist and Local Biodiversity officer advice to developers,
5. Master Planning – Biodiversity integrated into Strategic Landscape approach in order to inform design layout for extensive housing developments.
6. Partnering in the Collaborative Action for Natura Network project on Islay.
7. Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Action Plan (A&BLBAP) delivering 77 projects out of a total of 90 – the A&BLBAP is currently undergoing an interim refresh to align it with the emerging Scottish Biodiversity Strategy allied with enabling us to be able to put forward realistic and deliverable projects post-BREXIT.

Appendix 1. Argyll and Bute Council Biodiversity Duty Action Plan Annual Report 2017





b) The following provides and insight into partnership initiatives on biodiversity that Argyll and Bute Council are involved in: what these aimed to do, what actions have happened, what you believe the successes were and any plans for future or follow-up work.

- 1. The Collaborative Action for Natura Network (CANN) project:** a partnership with the Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust¹ as the management authority with funding partners: European Unions' INTERREG VA Programme, Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland for peatland habitat improvements and help protect endangered species.
- 2. The refresh of the Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Action Plan:** currently being refreshed by the Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Partnership steering group.
- 3. Officer Biosecurity Site Visit-** Aide memoir in place now

¹ The Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust was developed by Argyll and Bute Council 2013 in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland, the National Health Trust and the Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise Network. <https://www.act-now.org.uk/en/> The Argyll and Bute Council Local Biodiversity Officer is an advisor to the Trust.



4. **Hermitage Park- Helensburgh-** Heritage Lottery funded park restoration project- with a variety of habitat improvements including pond, river, grassland (wet and dry), invasive non-native species removal, installation of bat and bird boxes. The park is on the John Muir trail route.





Section 4: Partnership working and biodiversity communications.

a) Here are some examples of Argyll and Bute Council's involvement in partnership working on biodiversity.

- Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Partnership- LBAP refresh and delivery
- Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust- partner funded projects.
- Working with a range of officials on Master Planning projects
- Working with major developers on a number of housing developments to integrate biodiversity gains.

Our website is key to communicating biodiversity; it can be found under three headings:

- Biodiversity, Invasive Non-Native Species and the Local Development Plan.
<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/home>
- We also have a Twitter a/c and post weekly news items. We also communicate with schools and community groups through email.

b) Website and Twitter promotion- for the Biodiversity Technical Note for



Planners and Developers and the Biodiversity Check List- it was also promoted in the local press.

c) In terms of training or learning activities that have been carried out internally or externally relating to biodiversity, here is a list of some of activities.

- The Local Biodiversity Officer is a member of the National Local Biodiversity Officers Network and represents them on the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Invasive Non-Native Species group, the National Peatland Group and is the L.A. representative on the Scottish Forum for Natural Capital- 'Future Land Management Business Models Working Group'
- The Local Biodiversity Officer attends a number of Sharing Good Practice events as part of her CPD
- The Local Biodiversity Officer has given presentation at the Plant Health Conference- ***Biodiversity and Plant Health-Making the Link*** and to the Scottish Policy Seminar on ***Next steps for enhancing natural capital and biodiversity in Scotland-*** on 27 Feb and 1 March 2017 respectively.
- The Local Biodiversity Officer has given several awareness raising presentations to elected members on Biodiversity and the Biodiversity Technical Note.



- d) **Identify any opportunities that your staff are given to take part in practical action such as volunteering,**
- i. Bat Conservation Trust- Bat sighting reports
 - ii. Butterfly Conservation- Butterfly recording
 - iii. Big Garden Bird Survey- promotion and participation.
 - iv. Family related activities- Bumble Bees, Growing Wild.

Section 5: Biodiversity highlights and challenges

- a) **Describe you organisation's main achievements for biodiversity over the reporting period and what you are most proud of (this can include processes, plans, projects, partnerships, events and actions).**

See **Appendix 1**. Argyll and Bute Biodiversity Duty Action Plan Annual Report 2017.

- b) **The Future challenges over the next three years are mainly:**

- Funding,
- Resource- capacity to deliver,
- The outcome of BREXIT as most of our biodiversity is delivered by estates, farmers and crofters through the SRDP.



Section 6: Monitoring

- a) What follow-up actions or monitoring have you undertaken to assess the impacts of the actions you have taken? How have you measured this?**

Monitoring of the Argyll and Bute Council Biodiversity Duty Action Plan is annually monitored annually with a note of future actions for the next refresh. Measurement is by completion and survey responses as appropriate.

- b) Does your monitoring show any significant trends of highlight any areas of concern?**

In terms of Development Management trends, the emerging trend is for much more input by the Local Biodiversity Officer at the early stages of Master Planning along with biodiversity gains in individual developments. The officer has noted an increase in requests for biodiversity comments on a range of planning application.

I have concerns about habitat restoration where Invasive Non-Native Species are a feature- funding to carry out this work on habitats that are of a lesser priority is difficult to secure.

- c) Have you added your data to the National Biodiversity Network Gateway (NBN) or Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS)?**



No, as BARS is no longer active and partners enter information on the NBN Gateway.

Section 7: Contribution to targets

Use the following tables to indicate the biodiversity targets to which your organisation has contributed. You may wish to insert additional targets from the [2020 challenge for Scotland's biodiversity](#) (the Biodiversity Strategy), the [Six Big Steps for Nature](#) or the [Aichi Targets](#).

Targets/key steps from Chapter 1 (Healthy ecosystems) of the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity"	Contribution to key step?	Justification
(1.1) Encourage and support ecosystem restoration and management, especially in catchments that have experienced the greatest degradation	[tick if yes]	[include project title or reference for relevant activity]
(1.2) Use assessments of ecosystem health at a catchment level to determine what needs to be done		
(1.3) Government and public bodies, including SNH, SEPA and FCS, will work together towards a shared agenda for action to restore ecosystem health at a catchment-scale across Scotland		
(1.4) Establish plans and decisions about land use based on an understanding of ecosystems. Take full account of land use impacts on the ecosystems services that underpin social, economic and environmental health	Master Planning	Dunbeg Master Plan; Inveraray Master Plan



Targets/key steps from Chapter 3 (Biodiversity, health and quality of life) of the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity"	Contribution to key step?	Justification
(3.1) Provide opportunities for everyone to experience and enjoy nature regularly, with a particular focus on disadvantaged groups	See	
(3.2) Support local authorities and communities to improve local environments and enhance biodiversity using green space and green networks, allowing nature to flourish and so enhancing the quality of life for people who live there	Local Development Plan	
(3.3) Build on good practice being developed by the National Health Service (NHS) and others to help encourage greenspace, green exercise and social prescribing initiatives that will improve health and wellbeing through connecting people with nature	Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust	Branching Out project https://www.act-now.org.uk/en/what-we-do/233-branching-out
(3.4) Increase access to nature within and close to schools, and support teachers in developing the role of outdoor learning across the Curriculum for Excellence	yes	Through regular communication.
(3.5) Encourage public organisations and businesses to review their responsibilities and action for biodiversity, and recognise that increasing their positive contribution to nature and landscapes can help meet their corporate priorities and performance	Business and Biodiversity Booklet	Information available in booklet form
Targets/key steps from Chapter 4 (Wildlife, habitats and protected places) of the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity"	Contribution to key step?	Justification
(4.1) Ensure that the management of protected places for nature also provides wider public benefits	Local Nature Reserve at Duchess Woods and Holy Loch	Management Teams and Action Plans in place.
(4.3) Integrate protected areas policy with action for wider habitats to combat fragmentation and restore key habitats	Wildlife Corridors	Within developments to ensure connectivity
(4.5) Involve many more people than at present in this work and improve understanding of the poorly known elements of nature	Delivered by members of the Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Partnership	Individual organisations are better set up to do this as there funding facilitates such activities.



Targets/key steps from Chapter 5 (Land and freshwater management) of the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity"	Contribution to key step?	Justification
(5.1) Promote an ecosystem approach to land management that fosters sustainable use of natural resources and puts biodiversity at the heart of land-use planning and decision-making	1. Under development 2. Refresh LBAP	1. Within the emerging Local Development Plan 2. Ecosystem approach in current draft document.
(5.2) Ensure that measures taken forward under the Common Agricultural Policy encourage land managers to develop and retain the diversity of wildlife habitats and landscape features	Yes , currently happening but await post BREXIT outcomes	Await post BREXIT outcomes
(5.3) Support 'High Nature Value' farming and forestry	Yes: both LBAP and Forestry Strategy	Through the current CAP and SRDP activities.
(5.4) Put in place the management necessary to bring Scotland's protected areas into favourable condition and improve the ecological status of water bodies	Partner activity	
(5.5) Ensure that biodiversity and ecosystem objectives are fully integrated into flood risk management plans, and restore wetland habitats and woodlands to provide sustainable flood management	Yes,	Through our Flood Management Plan and emerging Climate Change Plan
(5.6) Restore and extend natural habitats as a means of building reserves of carbon and to help mitigate climate change	Currently involved with CANN project on Islay and providing information on an emerging project	Collaborative Action for Natura Network
(5.7) Provide clear advice to land and water managers on best practice	Partner involvement	SEPA and the Argyll Fisheries Trust



Targets/key steps from Chapter 6 (Marine and coastal) of the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity"	Contribution to key step?	Justification
(6.4) Achieve good environmental status for Scottish seas	Through Planning process	Through the Local Development Plan SG.



Appendix 1.

